

IX.

THE CURTIS VALLEY SCHOOL, CLINTON
TOWNSHIP, WAYNE COUNTY by MRS.
VERNA A. (CURTIS) VARCOE

The reader will recall that some information on the Curtis Valley School has already been published in NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA (Volume I, Number 3, page 27, footnote number 12).

Given below is a highly informative article on the Curtis Valley School that was written, expressly for publication in this issue of NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA, by Mrs. Verna A. (Curtis) Varcoe.

CURTIS VALLEY SCHOOL

A ONE-ROOM COUNTRY SCHOOL

by

Verna A. (Curtis) Varcoe

I am not sure when the school house at Curtis Valley was built. My father, Francis Henry Curtis (01-07-1855--04-30-1945) told me that my great-grand-father, Francis Griswold (11-14-1793--09-08-1869) gave the land for the school. The neighbors helped build the school. My father said he helped, along with his father, Henry Banning Curtis (01-01-1825--02-12-1907). My father told me, when it was built, it was with the understanding that it could be used as a Sunday School. (It was also used for church services, many times, when the weather was severe.) Prayer meetings were held there on Friday nights for years, which I attended. Also evangelistic services were held there, as well as other meetings. The Curtis Valley School belonged to the community. I have a Class Record Book that belonged to my grandfather, Henry Banning Curtis, dated September 1866. He was the Sunday School Bible teacher, and in that Class Record Book are listed the names of the members of his Sunday School class: Miss Gustin, Austin Gustin, Mary Blanding, Roxey Loomis, Celia Ledyard, Angeline Loomis, Nancy Snedeker, Maria Vanmetre, G. Loomis, Louisa Blanding, Chester Blanding, James Kanady, Russel Tenant, Manda McMullen, Lydia Sanders, Saphina Sanders, Fanny Ledyard, Lizzy Curtis, Alice Bartholomew, Herbert Sherwood, Mary Ledyard, Sally Dix, Theodore Elmendorf, Althea Griswold, Mary Howell, Fanny Duscha, Electa Arnold, Lottie Kingsbury, Fred Bartholomew, Silas Griswold, Charles Griswold, Almeda Ledyard, Martha Ledyard, Susan Griswold, Mary Gaylord, Daniel Griswold, Miss Luther, Mary Ann Ledyard, Henry Sherwood, Maria McMullen. Some of the members of the Sunday School class came from the Maple Grove area; some from beyond Charles Geuther's place, traveling several miles, and of course those nearer by. Lillie (Ledyard) Nell (b. 12-24-1862), who lived to be over 90, and had a good memory, told me, when I visited her in 1955, that she went to Sunday School in the Curtis Valley Sunday School in 1870. She believed there had been a previous building, that had burned down. I have a letter from her, dated May 4, 1948, in which she wrote: "I know there was a Sunday school in the old school house before I was born, as I heard my people say so. The first Sunday school held in the then new school house (1870) was at the end of that summer, before the steps were on the school house. Your grandpa was Bible class teacher... When this was built, it was with the understanding that it also be used for religious purposes."

My mother-in-law, Phebe (McMullen) Varcoe, taught school at one time at Curtis Valley. I have the brass hand-bell that she used to call the pupils into school. She attended Pleasant Mount Academy before teaching. When she attended school at Curtis Valley as a pupil, one of her teachers was John Niles, who became Dr. John Niles, Senior, of Carbondale. My mother, Rena (Stanton) Curtis (03-08-1866--05-12-1933), also taught at Curtis Valley. She attended Waymart Normal School before teaching. She told me that she received \$13.00 per month and boarded around. (I presume that is where she met my father, Francis Henry Curtis.) She also taught at Edenville, which was below Aldenville and below Eugene Curtis' residence. (My father claimed this was the home where P. P. Bliss wrote the song "Almost Persuaded." Others claim it was in a home above Aldenville.)

My husband, Ensign Henry Varcoe (07-25-1896--06-19-1978), went to school at Curtis Valley in 1902-1903. I have the Souvenir Booklet he received for that year. On the cover of that booklet it states: "Souvenir Curtis Valley School, District No. 4, Clinton Twp., Wayne County, Penna. 1902-1903 Presented by Grace A. Giles, Teacher (photo of teacher attached to cover)." Inside the front cover it states: "Officers D. L. Hower, Supt. Earl Loomis, Director." On page 3 of this booklet, the names of the 26 pupils for the year 1902-1903 are listed. They are: Edna Hauenstein, Ethel Gaylord, Carrie Curtis, Pearl Arnold, Lois Saunders, Irene Curtis, Lizzie Geuther, Helen Curtis, Burton Hutchins, Francis Curtis, Homer Curtis, Vance Griswold, Claude Arnold, Keith Arnold, Grover Bennett, Galen Gaylord, Stephen Snedeker, Maurice Snedeker, Ensign Varcoe, Charlie Saunders, Ward Saunders, Howard Holford, Arthur Holford, Leon Schirmer, Victor Geuther, Hobart Curtis. Mr. Hower was County Superintendent for a number of years, and he would visit each school in Wayne County at least once a year. We all tried to be on our best behavior while he was there. Miss Grace A. Giles was teacher at Curtis Valley again in 1906-1907, when I had her for a teacher. I was in the second grade at that time. My first grade teacher in 1905-1906, also at the Curtis Valley School, was Mrs. Effie B. Oliver. I think she taught there more than one year. The pupils listed in the Souvenir Booklet for the Curtis Valley Public School for 1905-1906 are as follows: Carrie Curtis, Ward Sanders, Keith Arnold, Bliss Treat, Dwight Rude, Rose Curtis, Francis Curtis, Homer Curtis, Lois Sanders, Lynn Arnold, Pearl Arnold, Arthur Holford, Hobart Curtis, Henry Curtis, Harriet Curtis, Homer Hauenstein, Galen Gaylord, Ensign Varcoe, Verna Curtis, Helen Curtis, Leo Treat. The Directors for 1905-1906 are as follows: P. H. Kennedy, Charles Buckland, Charles Varcoe, R. H. Clift, G. W. Lee, S. A. Snedeker. (The Treats lived on the Ravnika farm and came down over the hills to school.) Miss Grace A. Giles went west and married, adding Foster to her name. In 1951 she came back east for a visit. Her former pupils got together and had a party for her. It was held at the Curtis Homestead [see map on page three of Volume I, Number 1 of NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA, whereon the Curtis Homestead is marked "H. B. Curtis"], the home of Hobart and Lois (Norton) Curtis. (Grace A. Giles was an Aunt to Hobart.) The former pupils put together to give her a gift. It was a heart made of coal, with a "coal diamond" in the center. We enjoyed reminiscing with a short program. As usual, on such occasions, I made up a poem for the party about her and our school days. Here is the poem:

CURTIS VALLEY SCHOOL

1901-1902	Teacher - Grace (Giles) Foster	
1902-1903		1906-1907

In a little country school house many years ago,
There was a room full of kids that many of you know.

The teacher we remember, although living in the West;
To-night we have assembled and have her as our guest.

Some have come from a distance, while others live quite near,
Now let us reminisce a little, while we are here.

The tales that could be told, I'll leave that up to you.
The teacher might say you were good except, perhaps a few.